Red Action

Never mind the Hypocrisy

Issue No 25 August 1986 20p

BELFAST, CAPE TOWN THE FIGHT IS THE SAME

The events which have been occurring in recent months in South Africa, have brought home to many people in this part of the world, the fundamentally evil nature of the apartheid regime and the state machine which upholds it. The pictures on our screens of police and soldiers opening fire on peacefull protestors, the shooting of young school-children, the arrests and imprisonments without trial and the suppression of freedom of the press, all of these have brought foward a wave of protest, not only from socialist and progressive groups, but also from many figures in the establishment as well.

M.P.s from all parties, figures from the House of Lords Trades Union leaders, all have been quick to add their voices to the protest. Recent weeks have seen figures as politically diverse as Tory M.P. Jim Pryor, T.U.C. leaders Norman Willis and Ron Todd and The Arch Bishop of Canterbury's special envoy (whatever that's meant to mean) Terry Waite, all visiting South Africa, and returning to condemn the government for resisting the calls for change.

This united display of concern by the British establishment, for an oppressed and brutalised people, is no doubt very satisfying for their own liberal consciences. However we can see it in a different light, if we compare it to the marked indifference and silence that they have shown, when another government a lot nearer home, has used exactly the same sort of tactics. That government is their own.

For 50 years, those Labour and Tory M.P.s who today cry out against the injustice of apartheid, themselves ruled over a state, where the most blatent discrimination was practiced against one section of the community. This discrimination based on religeon rather than colour pervaded every aspect of life, employment prospects, the right to council housing and living standards generally. As with the blacks in South Africa, many catholics in Northern Ireland did not even have the right to vote. Election boundries were rigged so that nearly every local government - even where catholics were in the majority of the population - were protestant dominated, as was the Northern Ireland Parliament. To enforce this rule they were able to call upon the services of an armed almost entirely protestant part time police force renowned for their brutality and violence. This remember was all happening in a state ruled by the British government.

MURDER

And then, when the oppressed people began to protest and fight back against the system, what was the reaction of that government. In 1972, a peacefull civil rights march through the city of Derry was opened fire upon by British para-troopers. 14 people were killed, nearly all shot in the back running away, and dozens wounded. Where were those amongst the British establishment who cry out so loudly about the shooting down of innocent black people that day. Or where were they in January of this year, when we marched through London to commemorate the event.

When will those so quick to condemn the barbaric killing of young black school children, also remember those Irish children who have been killed in recent years, victims of British Army plastic bullets. And what about those who are so quick to condemn the South African government for the arbitary arrests and imprisonments without trial. Have they never heard of the night when the British army swept through the streets of Belfast and Derry and arrested without charge or trial 342 Irish men, and as subsequently proved at the European Court of Human Rights, subjected many of them to torture. And have they never asked themselves today, about the non jury Diplock Court system, which is really no more than a rubber stamp of respectability on the same system.

It's quite clear that the "concern" which the likes of Margaret Thatcher and co. show for the black South Africans, is nothing more than the basest hypocrisy. They're concerned all right. Concerned to get things back to normal so that they can get back to making vast profits from their investments in the South African state. If achieving so be it. And if the South African government is to bull headed to see that, then they will have to be told. Hence the sudden criticism from former friends and colleagues.

The black South Africans themselves understand this well enough, which is why they refused to meet Goeffrey Howe on his recent trip. They know that the only true friends of oppressed people, are others themselves oppressed. Victory to the ANC. Victory to armed Republican Movement, and all revolutionary freedom fighters

SCENES SUCH AS THIS, HAVE QUITE RIGHTLY BROUGHT CONDEMNATION UPON THE THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD FROM ALL SECTIONS OF SOCIETY.

Carol Ann Kelly aged 12, died 22 May 1991.

Nora McCabe aged 30, died 9 July 1991.

Michael Donnelly aged 21, died 10 August 1990.

Julie Livingstone aged 14, died 13 May 1991.

Brian Stewart aged 13, died 10 October 1976.

Peter Magennis aged 41, died 9 August 1991.

Francis Rowntree aged 11½, died 28 April 1972

Stephen Geddis aged 16, died 30 August 1976.

Paul Whitters aged 15, died 28 April 1991

BUT WHAT ABOUT WHAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IN IRELAND. JUST A FEW OF THE PLASTIC BULLET VICTIMS IN RECENT YEARS

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

FORCE OF ARMS AND FORCE OF ARGUMENT

The Revolutionary Road to Socialism

FORCE OF ARMS AND FORCE OF ARGUMENT

The Revolutionary Road to Socialism

For many people, the phrase revolutionary socialism is one that is totally out of context in today's society. For them revolutions are something that belong in the past, with secret meetings of bearded men wearing fur hats, or if today, to far off "Banana Republic" type states run by tyrannical gangster dictators. But surely not in our society here today.

This is certainly the view of people like most members of the Labour Party, who consider themselves to be socialists but not revolutionaries They are what is known as "reformist socialists". In their view because in this country today we all have the right to vote in the parliamentary system, we are able to use that system to both improve our lives today, and ultimatly to achieve a socialist society. For these people, talk of revolution is the talk of those who are either immature romantics, or else "Rent a Mob" thugs who are only in it for the sake of confrontation and trouble. That they say, is why the vast majority of decent people take no notice of them and why the revolutionary left is just a tiny splinter movement.

Well we certainly couldn't attempt to deny that today the revolutionary left in this country is a very tiny movement. But there is in fact a very obvious reason for this

The 25 years after the end of the end of the Second World War, saw in this country as well as some others, the fastest rise in living standards in history. It is therefore not really suprising that most of those who grew up in that era knowing nothing but rising standards all of their lives, should feel that they have any reason to be interested in talk of revolution.

CREDIT

Reformist socialists encourage this view. They are quick to claim that it was reformism that was responsible for winning those great gains. In doing this however they give themselves credit which they don't really deserve. It isn't so much a question of reformism winning gains, but rather one of the capitalist system, when it is booming and can afford to give out the goodies, dishing them out through reformist movements.

We can see proof of this quite clearly today. Now that the capitalist system is in a mess, the capitalists try and defend their riches in the only way they can. By clamping down on workers living standards. And so we see today unemployment rocketing, wages being forced down, vital services like the National Health Service being cut to the bone. In fact all the great gains won in the years of the capitalist boom, being clawed back. In the face of this reformism has been absolutely powerless. Surely if it was reformism that was responsible for winning the gains, it would also be able to defend them.

EXAMPLE

In actual fact, the way it works is that the reformists find themselves helping to implement the cuts. It was the last Labour government which began the cuts in the Health Service. They did so not because they wanted to, but because the International Monetary Fund made it a condition for giving them a loan which they desperately needed to boost the ailing economy.

No clearer example could be shown of the fundamental weakness in the reformists ideology. Because they are committed to working within the capitalist system, they are unwilling to confront it. So when that system gets in a mess, they are forced to try and help bale it out. But the only way in which the system can be baled out is,by attacking the living standards of the workers. That is why we get the spectacle of Labour governments doing the Capitalists job for them, implementing wages freezes and cutting back services. What they are doing in effect is sayting, let's sacrifice now to get the system out of it's mess today, and tomorrow we'll get back on the road to socialism. But of course

tomorrow never comes. There have been four Labour governments elected in the last 23 years, but we are no nearer to socialism now than we were then.

And even on those rare occasions when a reformist government does try and introduce some radical measure, they are totally at the whim of the capitalists as to whether or not they will be allowed to implement them. Thus in 1976, when the Labour government attempted to bring in some measures which didn't meet with the approval of the rich capitalists, they threatened to withdraw their investments in Britain, which would have caused economic chaos. The government backed down.

SABOTAGE

However, this form of "investment strike" is merely one of the more civilised forms of sabotage, which capitalists use to undermine the efforts of reformist governments. When necessary, they can be a whole lot tougher. The most recent example of this, was seen in Chile in 1972.

Then, a democratically elected government, under the leadership of Salvador Allende who was considered to be a Marxist, attempted to implement some wide ranging reforms. The U.S. government tried desperately to undermine the Allende regime, engaging in both economic pressure, and actual industrial sabotage through the C.I.A.

Eventually they were able to provoke a coup led by the military and backed by the capitalist multi nationals, which wiped out the regime murdered tens of thousands of socialists and progressives and instituted a military dictatorship. Business as usual.

What we can see from this is that reformism can no more succeed in building socialism, than it can in defending the living standards of the workers within capitalism It is doomed to ultimate failure because it tries to reason with capitalism, when capitalism cannot be reasoned with. It's like being in a cage with a wild animal. Just because it may not eat you straight away, doesn't mean that you can start making plans with it to live a peaceful co-existence. You know that it will eat you as soon as it is hungry. Capitalism is such a wild animal with which we are caged. Eventually it is going to kill us, unless we kill it first.

And that is why we revolutionary socialists hold the views which we do. It isn't because we are romantics have never grown up, and it certainly isn't because we are just looking for trouble and confrontation for the sake of it. It is because we have studied and understood the way in which the capitalist system works, and have come to conclusion that firstly it can never guarantee the working classes a decent standard of living; and must therefore be replaced by a socialists system, but also that the capitalist class will never allow this to happen peacefully, and therefore it will have to be achieved by force.

ANSWERS

Of course we are not in a position to try and undertake this task today anyone can see that, but as we have seen in recent years, when the capitalist system is in crisis as it is now, the only way in which the capitalists can defend it, is by attacking the living standards of the working classes. But by doing this they, they expose to the working classes themselves the weakness of the reformist ideas which they have previously trusted. When the working classes begin to learn through their own bitter experience that the old answers don't work then they have to start to look for new answers. For the only answers which will really work. Revolutionary answers.

The last great crisis of capitalism in the 20s led to the Wall St. crash and the virtual collapse of the international capitalist system. That in it's turn, led to the social crisis which saw the rise and fall of fascism through the Second World War. So it took some pretty extreme answers to sort out the last capitalist crisis. Whether or not we are forced down that path this time, depends to a large extent how successful the revolutionary left is in winning the over the working class to organised resistance

EARLY

The present economic crisis is only in it's early stages. Yet already we have seen changes in society such as would have been thought impossible a few years ago. The inner city riots, the scenes during the miner's strike with the massive para-military operation and the reststence is provoked, the preparations for the use of platic bullets.

All of these are symptoms of the effect whtch the economic crisis of capitalism is beginning to have on our society. Of the state's attempt to clamp down on the woring classes, and of the beginnings of their attempts to resist.

As the crisis gets worse more and more sections of the working class will find themselves in the same position as the miners did and like them will come to the conclusion that the only way in which they can defend themselves from the attacks of the capitalist system and the state machine it controls is to directly confront that machine. It's not really such a big step from there, to starting to think, well why not throw the whole thing over and build a better saner system.

THE PRETENDERS

Red Action then is an organisation which claims to be a revolutionary one. As such we would support other revolutionary organisattons even though we may differ from them on some points. Ilowever the fact that an organisation describes itself as revolutionary doesn't necessarily mean that it has a truly revolutionary outlook. It is very easy in Britain today to go around describing yourself as a revolutionary. It doesn't cause you any great hardship or sacrifice Unfortunately it's more a case of the opposite, people take no notice of you. To find out in the relatively placid society in which we live today just how genuine a person's or an organisation's commitment to revolutionary struggle is, you need some way of testing it. For us, there is no clearer test than Ireland.

It is quite amazing how many self styled revolutionaries in this country, quite correctly give their unqualified support to armed revolutionary movements around the world, but then start to hum and hah when it comes to Ireland. The explanation for this is not very hard to find. It is of course very easy to give your unqualified support to a revolutionary movement which operates a few thousand miles away, because you will never be called upon to do anything to prove that support and as few people in this country care about what is happening thousands of miles away, it won't get you any bad reaction form your neighbours.

DIFFERENT

Ireland however is different. It is happening today right on our doorstep. If you give your unqualified support to a revolutionary movement which is operating that near, then it suggests that perhaps you should in some way involve yourself in trying to assist that struggle, even if only in a very small way.

But this of course starts opening up the door to things like harassment from the police perhaps even arrest, something that most self styled British lefties have never had to face, and in many cases are not willing to face.

Rather than admit however that they have neither the courage or committment to retain the revolutionary outlook when confronted with a real revolution, they come up with all sorts of reasons to justify their desertion of the Irish revolution, and to even present it as the correct political position.

And so we get all of these half baked theories telling us that the Irish revolution is not really a revolution because the Republican Movement is a class alliance, or that they are an elitist terrorist movement which has no mass support or even that the Republican Movement is a movement of Green Fascists.

REALITY

All of these mental gymnastics have but one aim. To try and turn fear and lack of revolutionary committment into a virtue. To try and somehow prove that those who refuse to even support the revolution, are the true revolutionaries, and that those who are actually engaged in it are not. Somebody pass me the pills.

The reality of Ireland is the reality of revolution. People die, blood runs in the streets, people get locked up in prisons for years and it is awfull. If that reality is too much for you then fair enough. But be honest and admit it. Don't start looking for criticisms just to use the as an excuse to reject the whole struggle. Of course there are criticisms that can be made of the Republican Movement. Criticisms can be made of any political movement. No doubt there are members of the Republican Movement who would themselves have criticisms of it.

But nothing can change the fact that they are in the front line of the struggle against the British state, and in that struggle, they deserve our complete and total support. Those who are not willing to give that support, merely prove that their committment to the revolution, ends where the real revolutiin starts.

A REVOLUTIONARY PEOPLE'S ARMY

"ANOTHER HITLER"

DURING THE LAST GREAT CRISIS OF CAPITALISM CONSERVATIVES EVERYWHERE BACKED HITLER'S RISE TO POWER

BLAST FROM THE PAST

There can be little doubt the recent disaster in the nuclear plant at Chernobyl, brought home to many previously apathetic people, some of the dangers of the nuclear power industry. The risk of contamination to vegetables and livestock in this country, meant that it was no longer a question of an abstract debate on the likelihood of Armageddon, but one of practical decisions on the wisdom of eating high-risk foods, with all the potential consequences it may have.

Despite soothing noises from the Government, people were alarmed, and the stocks of powdered milk in London shops was depleted in days. Television debates on whether or not such a disaster could occur in this country proved to be academic, as clouds of pollution sailed on without regard to international borders.

Those with a vested interest in the nuclear industry, instead of trying to play down the disaster which could have proved counter-productive, instead tried to deflect possible criticism from themselves by suggesting that such a disaster could only occour in Communist Russia.

UNIQUE

In a bold move to try and outflank anti-nuclear protestors, they examined in great detail, many of those factors connected with the nuclear industry, which people find most disturbing The obsessive secrecy, the likelihood of human error, lack of expertise in dealing with disasters etc - but tried to present these factors as being somehow unique to the being something somehow unique and characteristic of the communist system, rather than a general problem for the nuclear industry world wide.

Having confined all of the problems of the nuclear industry to Russia, they then went on to grossly exagerate the size of the disaster, suggesting early on that thousands had died, that a second reactor had exploded nearby, and accused the Russian authorities of covering up the facts. All the time, "experts" were continually on hand to reassure viewers that of course our nuclear industry was different, and it could never happen here, which of course avoids the uncomfortable fact that to be a disaster here it doesn't have to happen here.

PROPAGANDA

The gist of all the propaganda was that nuclear power isn't the problem communism is. You can trust us, but you can't trust them. Ironically through all of this, we have learnt more about the dangers of nuclear power through Chernobyl, than we ever did from the scares that occured at the British and U.S. nuclear plants at Sellafield and three Mile Island.

Not even the most reactionary editorial however, tried to suggest that the Russians had done it deliberately, as part of a huge experiment to test the effects of radiation on human beings. This is exactly what the U.S. government did in the pacific just after the Second World War.

EXPLOSIONS

In 1947, the United Nations gave the guardianship of the Marshall Islands to the U.S. who in subsequent years exploded 66 hydrogen and atomic bombs on them.

The first, exploded on the 1st of March 1954 over Bikini Atoll, was a thousand times as powerful as the bomb exploded at Hiroshima the equivilant of 15 million tons of TNT. The fall-out from it, fell like snow on the Islands of Ronglead and Utirik. Children played in it for hours until their eyes began to burn and they started to vomit. A few days later, the Islanders were evacuated to a U.S. Navy base, where they were reported as being well.

To this present day on Ronglead, only one child has not been operated on for a thyroid tumour. A Utirik Islander has described how after the blast women started giving birth to creatures "like cats and rats" and how everyone started to become afflicted by tumours and disease.

RADIO-ACTIVE

The Ronglead Islanders were allowed back to their - still radioactive - Island after three years, and were visited by teams of doctors, who tested them for radiation, but who never treated them or explained to them the causes of their illnesses.

The callous attitude of the U.S. government towards these people, can be judged by the report of the Atomic Energy Commission, which stated "The habitation of these people on this Island will provide valuable ecological data on human beings.

When the U.S. relinquished their guardianship of the Islands, Ronald Reagan perhaps not suprisingly, declined to attend the hand-over ceremoney, prefering instead to send a taped message which stated with stunning hypocrisy "you will always be family to us".

In 1959, U.S. propaganda films had described the Islanders as "just savages". You can make your own mind up as to who the real savages are.

A VERY APT SCENE FROM ONE OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

DOWN ON THE FARM

A recent march through north London organised by the "Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign" highlighted the anger still felt by many people on the estate, ten months after last years riots, or as the locals prefer to call them, uprisings. Hundreds of people have been arrested, and many face long prison sentences, such as the two who in June, were sentenced to five years for affray. This is the price that many face paying, for defending their community from the state.

The Broadwater Farm Estate, was built in the late 1960s and early 70s. Before long, structural defects in the construction were causing many problems for the residents.

ASSOCIATION

In 1981, a Youth Association was founded by a woman called Dolly Kiffen. It had no funding from the council, and it's first premises was a derelict chip shop. Before long it had established a wide range of activities such as youth work and providing meals for pensioners, and had also been involved in the setting up of co-operative services for the estate - a launderette, a grocers and a hairdressers. It was also involved in the designing and building of community centres, workshops, offices and kitchens.

People were becoming more and more involved in the running of their own estate. The police were told that they were unwelcome and unnecessary. Meanwhile there was a major reduction in crime on the estate. Vehicle crimes down 50%, burglary down 62% and robbery down 39%. An area typical of many in inner cities, had been transformed by the efforts of it's own residents. People began to move back into Broadwater Farm.

Last September, after the shooting in Brixton of black woman Mrs Cherry Groce by police, Tottenham police started a large stop and search operation, against black people going in and out of the estate, while white drivers were waved through. Many people had the impression that they being deliberately provoked and wound up. Then on October the 2nd, without any incident having occured the police were put on full scale riot alert.

Floyd Jarret, a well known leading member of the Youth Association, was stopped while driving his own car, accused of stealing it and arrested. Then using a key that they had taken from him, police let themselves into the house of his mother Cynthia. Soon afterwards Mrs Jarret was dead from a heart attack, and evidence was later given that she had been pushed about by the police.

BATTLE

Such an incident, coming on top of a situation already made tense by the activities of the police, was bound to spark something off, and it did. However the police got a lot more than they bargained for as bricks, bottles, petrol bombs and even gunfire rained down on them. The battle raged for ten hours. When it was over, a policeman lay dead, and preperations were in hand for the use of plastic bullets as yet unused in Britain. The feeling of many people is that the whole thing was deliberately provoked by the police, to give them an excuse to come down heavy on the people of an estate which they hate.

Six days after the incident the number of police on standby in the area, was 9,165. Houses were raided in the early morning, doors were sledgehammered in, and property of all descriptions taken from the owners, even items such as food, on the pretext that it had been looted from shops. Many of those arrested were denied many of their legal rights such as access to solicitors.

The anger of the police was great. From the size of the Broadwater Farm Estate, you can see that those of the age-group involved in the battle couldn't number more than a few hundred at the very most. And yet as T.V. film clearly showed they took on, and in many cases drove back a vastly superior number of trained policeman, armed with riot shields and sticks. As has been proved so often throughout history, when the oppressed people rise, their courage and enthusiasm knows no bounds. No wonder the police were sick.

MILITANT

Recently, the government offered £500,000 for improvements to the estate. Money however, is not the main problem. It is the police. Today, the mood of the people on the estate, is very militant. Their message is clear. When pushed they will fight back, as they have already proved.

Through the post

Dear Red Action

I am writing to make what I think are a few necessary points about Red Wedge. It is not a fan club for Billy Bragg Paul Weller OR Neil Kinnock It is a long overdue initiative by the Labour Party, to encourage young people to take an interest in politics, and to widen the scope of political activity.

Red Wedge is built on ideas that were initiated in campaigns like CND, Rock Against Racism and the miner's strike. These campaigns used things like badges, posters, T shirts and bands to gain publicity and support.

Red Wedge expects to go further than this. The initiative should come from below as much as from above, with groups and individuals using Red Wedge, as a focus for their ideas skills and enthusiasm.

If we are to reach more people, and challenge the huge P.R. resources available to the Tories and their friends, we have to be ready to use new methods of communication. We have to realise that making a video can be just as important as making a speech, that it is just a valid to write a song or a play, as it is to write a book or a newspaper article.

For too long, the language of politics has tended to alienate and bypass working class people, and too many people on the left have been quite happy to preach to the converted and argue amongst themselves, trying to be big fish in a small pool, rather than swim in the dangerous waters of the open sea, where they would probably be ignored and swept aside. (I do not include Red Action in this catagory)

Using new methods of communication, does not mean that your ideas and principals have to be watered down. You don't judge a book by it's cover.

I wouldn't expect to find much sympathy for the Labour Party in Red Action, but like it or not, in the next couple of years there is going to be an election,

RED ACTION
PO BOX 158
HATFIELD
HERTS

and the Labour Party is the only Parliamantary alternative to the Tories. It is not enough for people on the far left to reluctantly support them on the eve of an election when it could be too late.

Within Red Wedge, there is a lot of criticism of Kinnock and the kind of half hearted politics that we saw during the miner's strike. It has deliberately kept itself independent of the Labour Party, being open to anyone who sees the election of a Labour government at the next election as essential.

Red Wedge aims to use the full potential of all socialists in order to beat the Tories. Art, photography fashion, theatre and music are all at it's disposal. Everyone, from the smallest band to the biggest pop star has a part to play. Red Wedge will take politics out of the libraries and onto the streets. Socialism with a smile and a song. Can you really argue with that ?

Richard Edwards
London

PS The first issue of the Red Wedge fanzine "Well Red" has just been published It features Madness, The Blow Monkeys, The Communards as well as various articles on politics and music. Available from 150 Walworth Rd. London SE17 1JT. 75p including P+P.

Red Action pamphlet

First published two years ago, this pamphlet, although slightly out of date now, still gives a good insight into the discussions and events that lead to the formation of Red Action. Available from the box number, price 50p inclusive of postage and packing.

SUPPORT RED ACTION

Red Action is an organisation founded by working class people to work for the furthering of the cause of Socialism. Membership is open to all who accept our political principles and pay a weekly subscription. Every member has an equal vote on all Red Action policy and decisions.

If you support our aims but do not wish to become a member, you can become a supporting member. This does not entitle you tp vote, but you will receive:

1. A free subscription to the newspaper.

2. A regular internal newsletter that will keep you informed of what is going on in the organisation.

3. Notification of any Red Action activities in your area.

The cost for this is £10 for one year.

Subscriptions to the paper are still available separately. The cost is £3 pounds for ten issues. Please remember that producing a paper is a very uneconomic business and we are always very grateful for any donations, and especially grateful to anyone who can take extra copies to sell.

PO box 158
Hatfield
Herts

NEWS FROM NOWHERE

In the Ulster Loyalist pamphlet "Why Ulster says No" each chapter is prefaced by a quotation from someone who the writter admires. Those thus quoted include people such as Disraeli and Walter Bagshot (who the hell is he) and also the author of the shortest quote in the book "Once in, there is no out" Who is he ? Al Capone.

In reply to a critical letter from two students, Tory M.P. John Carlisle wrote "students such as yourselves are nothing more than middle class parasites living off working class tax payers." A bit cheeky really, coming from the who is Vice President of the Federation of Conservative Students.

An M.P. recently wrote "After showing a party of infants aged five to eight around the House of Commons, I recieved many charming letters, almost all of which recorded the most exciting moment of the visit, as seeing a dog being sick in St James' Park." Out of the mouth of babes.

A new dog kennel for Nancy Reagan's King Charles spaniel "Rex" is being fitted by an interior decorator who is including a parquet floor, a plaid covered dog bed and photos of the Reagan family. Yep things are pretty tough all over.

"The Gadafys, the IRA, the Militants, all aided by Moscow, will never respond to reason or sweet words - They only understand force." So speaks Tory M.P. Tom Normanton. Ah the sweet voice of moderation.

Following a report that many South African firms pay their black and coloured workers considerably less than the minimum wage necessary for survival, a South African University commissioned a study to find out how they managed it. The report concluded that coloureds can do without vitamin C and therefore they don't need to buy oranges, and blacks need to buy less razor blades. Well that explains everything.

People sometimes wonder how the Jewish holocaust was ever allowed to happen. Back in the 1930's when anti fascist groups called for sanctions against Nazi Germany in protest at their treatment of the Jews, they were begged to drop the idea, on the grounds that it was "The Jews who would suffer the worst." Sounds familiar doesn't it.

Regular readers of this column, will notice that it's name has been changed from the previous "Flying Column". We felt that we had little choice in this matter as in recent weeks "An Phoblacht/Republican News" the weekly newspaper published by Sinn Fien, have started running a column on their back page called... yes you've guessed it. Mindful of the fact that the name is originally derived from the IRA flying columns which used to operate against the British forces in the 20s we have to concede that they are more entitled to use it than us, and anyway who would have believed in future that we thought of it first. And so we graciously withdraw. But never let it be again said, that the Republican movement can't learn anything from the British left.

PS There's no arguments about this name. We've definitly nicked it. From a bookshop in Liverpool

Lord Marshall of the Central Electricity Generating Board commenting on the Chernobyl disaster stated, "To see Chernobyl in terms different from a jumbo jet crash is to get it out of perspective". Well I can't remember a plane crash happening in Russia, where you had to worry about the wrekage turning up in your Sunday dinner, Can you ?

And finally, just for fun you understand, we have Red Action's fun packed quiz. The following are a list of quotations made in recent weeks by prominent personalities from the world of sport politics and royalty, followed by a list of names. All you have to do is sort out who said what, and send off your answers, and tell us in not more than twenty words, why you think that Red Action are the organisation most historically suited to implement the Marxist theory of the Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The winner will recieve the opportunity to treat the Red Action editorial board to a day out on the piss.

"I will not come out and condemn apartheid in South Africa."

"The Labour Party is more socialist than any other socialist party in Europe."

"They met at polo, where everyone meets."

"To the emotion charged atmosphere in which the sanctions argument rages, the British Prime Minister brings the voice or reason."

"Such a pity, just as the darling blackamores were begining to like it."

Now here's the list. All you have to do is put them in the correct order. 1 Zola Budd, 2 Margaret Thatcher, 3 Sarah Ferguson's mother, 4 The South African state radio station 5 The Queen Mother, commenting on the possible break up of the Commonwealth over the sanctions row.

THE YOUNG SWEEPS

It is a well known fact, that many of the present Tory government, including Margaret Thatcher and many of her senior cabinet ministers, look back with great fondness and admiration on the Victorian era of British history. However it is not only for the sake of nostalgia that they look back on these times. They also take from it ideologies which they use to guide them in their approach to the workings of modern day society. Of these ideologies, the one in which they invest perhaps the most faith, is that of the "Free Market Economy"

This was an economic theory, worked out by early economists, most notably Adam Smith and David Ricardo. Basically what it says is that for the capitalist system to work most effectively, it must be totally free from any sort of state interference in terms of wage or employment legislation. In this way it is argued, the market will find it's true level of balance between employers and employees. It is worth looking back to see the effect that these ideas had at the time of their inception, to give us some idea of the sort of relationship between employers and employees which present day Tories look for

SWEEPS

Probably the most famous form of child labour from the Victorian era, and the one which allows us to see most clearly the twisted logic behind the "Free Market" economy, was the profession of chimney sweep.

In the nature of the trade only the smallest and therefore the youngest of children could be used. Parents were naturally reluctant to apprentice their children to such a notortous business, so for a time children were imported from Italy. However this was expensive, and the master sweeps hit on the solution of the pauper children in the parish workhouse.

A man called Jonas Hanway, studied a number of case histories.

One subject, started at the usual age of five, had grown during his apprenticeship to a height of three feet seven inches. Childrens bones being pliable at that age and subject to deformities, his legs had been twisted into a permanent "S" shape. This particular lad was also blind.

Many other young sweeps (seven was the average age, and starting at four was not uncommon) developed cancers due to the prolonged contact with the soot. Boys were encouraged to climb by lighting fires beneath them, and the insertion of pins into their feet. It is not generally realised that one of the principal functions of the sweeps, was the putting out of actual fires. Roasted boys was the result. One such boy, according to a parliamentary report "being dug out after he had failed to appear, was found to have scraped the skin off of his knees and elbows clear to the bone in his unavailing efforts to escape."

By the the 1800s flexible rods and brooms were available, which were capable of cleaning all but one chimney in a hundred. But master sweeps refused to use them, finding the pauper children cheaper.

Such a horrible trade, eventually attracted the attention of a parliamentary commission - in 1917 - at which the master sweeps argued that the boys were rendered useful by the employment, were well cared for, and defended the use of four and five year olds on the grounds that older children were too large and their bones were not pliable enough to be deformed as the trade required.

EVIDENCE

More scrupulous masters, said that they were forced to practice the barbarities of the unscrupulous left to their own devices by the orthodoxy of the "Free Market" or else be forced out of business themselves.

Mill-owners of the time said exactly the same thing. Where organised employers were allowed unrestricted exploitation of an economically vulnerable workforce, forbidden by law to organise (trade unions were illegal then) bad working practices inevitably drove out the good

The reaction of Parliament to the appalling evidence of it's own committee is instructive. M.P.s the press, political economists all argued that the system of the "Free Marker"permitted no leeway. Commercial prosperity depended absolutely on the maximum exploitation of available labour, and were this delicate "balance" interfered with by legislation, national bankruptcy would result.

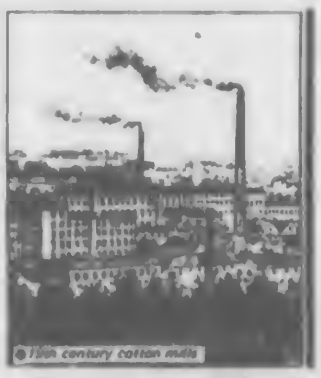
CONSCIENCE

Ricardo announced that the bill which attempted to raise the age of apprenticeship to 14 could not be supported, and the House of Commons, where he was an M.P. nodded wisely. Other M.P.s versed in political economy, defended the inviobility of the principle of "free labour" arguing that a dangerous precedent would be set, if masters were not allowed to buy children and force them up chimneys.

The same M.P. also added that such children were often "the children of rich men, begotten in an improper manner, and in suffering for their father's sins could be no affront to a Christian conscience." The sweeps that he had seen he added, had been "cheerfull enough."

LAWS

The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Ellenbrough, said that as any citizen already had a remedy against abuse in common law, no new law was necessary, while the Bill's main opponent Lord Lauderdale said simply that the matters that the Bill addressed itself to, were best left to "the moral feelings of perhaps the most moral people in the world" and claimed that "Charity and benevolence" would be extinguished by the implementation of humanitarian laws.



18th century cotton mills

Eventually in 1918, the Bill was passed in the Commons with the proviso that certain types of large country houses - ie the sort that M.P.s themselves owned would be exempt. Alarmed at this, master sweeps lobbied the House of Lords stressing the danger to property from fire, which would exist if the child sweep could no longer be employed Insurance companies were also brought in, to assure their Lordships of increased premiums, if little children were no longer allowed to be forced up the chimneys of their mansions. They voted the Bill down by 32 to 12.

STANDARDS

Such were the standards of the age to which Margaret Thatcher and so many of her associates look upon with such affection, and such are the realities of the effects of the "Free market" economy in which they express so much faith.

Today of course the ruling classes are a lot more cautious about what they say, at least in public, but there are still plenty of echoes of today to those of yesteryear.

The reality today is the same as it always was. The freedom of the employer in a "Free Market" economy means in practice, nothing more than the freedom of the most unscrupulous, to exploit as far as is possible the weakest and most vulnerable. That is the real face of Toryism. Behind the smokescreen of posh manners and education, lay the standards and morals, of the worst sort of characters in a Charles Dickens novel.

WE ARE RED ACTION

Red Action is an organisation founded to work towards the ending of the capitalist system of production, and the establishment of a socialist one

CAPITALISM The working class form the overwhelming majority of society. They produce everything, but not for themselves. It becomes the property of the minority upper class. A worker would have to pay many times his/her wages to buy back the goods that they produce in that time. It is legalised robbery. This system also allows the minority to decide what should be said and when on the basis of their personal profit rather than social need. It is this that allows food to rot in butter and beef mountains, while people go hungry, and buildings to stand empty while people are homeless. Capitalism also allows a small minority to own all of the resources and means of production on which we all depend—raw materials, factories, machinery, etc. This means that most people have no say in how these resources are used. Billions of pounds in labour and materials can be, and often are wasted on socially useless projects while people die for the want of medical equipment that could have been produced. Private ownership of these resources also allows the owners to deny to society the use of them as they wish. It is this, that causes people to be unemployed while the machines on which they could be producing the things that they need stand idle.

SOCIALISM A socialist society will be one that millions of people will be involved in shaping. Therefore no one group of people can say exactly what that society will be like. However, there are certain features that would have to be present in society, before we would consider giving up the struggle for socialism.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION Only this will create a basis whereby the whole of society can collectively decide how best to employ all of its resources, mechanical and human. In this way wastefulness, whether in the production of socially useless things, or by enforced idleness of machines or workforce would be eliminated. When all resources are used in useful production instead of just a part of them as at present, the amount of labour required from each individual would be much less than at present. Development of new technology would further reduce the labour requirement. Society will stand on the brink of an era of leisure and plenty that past generations could not even have even dreamed of.

CONTROL OF SOCIALIST SOCIETY In capitalist society all of the institutions of social control—army police force judiciary—are run and controlled by unelected representatives of the upper classes. The majority of people have no say in their appointment and no control over their actions. We believe that in a truly socialist society the need to police people will eventually die away. Whatever form of social control may be necessary until that stage is reached, all of its representatives will be elected by and subject to dismissal by the community that they represent.

FREEDOM AND EQUALITY All of those that contribute to a socialist society will receive equal reward and enjoy equal rights, irrespective of colour, race, sex or creed. All of society's facilities—leisure, education, medical, etc—will be equally available to all. All questions of personal morality—homosexuality, abortion, divorce, etc—will be left to individual choice and free from state interference. There will be freedom of worship for all religions, but no church will be allowed to interfere in state matters.

CLASS STRUGGLE Real Socialism cannot be achieved through parliament. The Labour Party does not try to end capitalism, merely to give workers a better deal within it. If they did attempt to take real power from the ruling class and give it to the workers, they would suffer the same fate as other parliamentary movements that have tried to do this. The ruling class would use its control over the forces of the state to crush them. To achieve Socialism, a Socialist movement has to be ready to overthrow capitalism by force. The law is made and administered by the upper class and used by them as a weapon in the class struggle. Therefore, a socialist movement has to be prepared to defy the law when necessary. We support the right of national liberation movements around the world to engage in armed struggles to free their countries from oppression by foreign powers. We fully support the revolutionary armies, The Irish Republican Army, and the Irish National Liberation Army in their war against the British state machine which is also the enemy of the British working class. The war in Ireland is caused by the British presence there, which is only maintained by armed force. Only armed force can remove that presence and stop the war.

THE EASTERN BLOC The Eastern Bloc countries and Cuba etc are used as examples to try and prove socialism to be undesirable. In our view although capitalism has been overthrown in these countries, none of them have succeeded in building a truly socialist society. In some cases this has been because incorrect politics within the new regimes have led them to adopt the wrong policies. In others because the new regimes have inherited such under-developed economies, and because of external pressures beyond their control—threat of American invasion, economic boycott and sanctions etc—there has been neither the political and economic stability nor the economic resources, necessary to begin the construction of a socialist society. We do accept that some of these countries have made significant advances from very primitive beginnings, and may continue to advance as they develop more modern industrial economies.

THE ORGANISATION The period of capitalist growth and expansion during the 50s and 60s raised working class living standards considerably. Mainly because of this the working class that emerged from that period, showed little interest in revolutionary socialist politics. They became the domain of professional thinkers and intellectuals. A cultural gap had been created between the working class and the left. The organisations that were created by the left in this period, were in nearly every case modelled on the Bolshevik Party in revolutionary Russia. It is a form of organisation in which a small intellectual leadership, wields great authority over a highly disciplined membership. History gives us many examples of how easily in this form of organisation, a corrupt leadership can invoke that discipline and authority, merely to maintain its own position of power. Any who question the leadership or the party line that they hand down, are dangerous heretics to be cast out as soon as possible. The organisation eventually becomes one made up entirely of servile and unquestioning members. The atmosphere in such an organisation is one that is totally alien to most working class people. They shun it, causing it to retreat even further into abstract politics. The estrangement between the organisation and the class is complete. Even in organisations where the leadership is not corrupt, the tendency to look back to revolutionary Russia for the solutions to all of today's problems leads to them coming up with answers that have little or no relevance to the working class in Britain today. Feeling the need for a new form of organisation, Red Action was formed in 1981. Its primary aim is to be able to relate revolutionary socialist ideas to working class people, most of whom are cynical if not hostile towards the left. To achieve this the organisation must itself be of the class, in content and character. It must be able to recognise that the vast majority of workers are not revolutionary, and not expect immediate revolutionary commitment from them. It must show that it does not just talk politics, but is willing to back them up with action when necessary. It must show that it is principled and consistent in its politics, and not just raise and drop issues when it suits. It must recognise that no leadership is immune from possible corruption, and allow true internal democracy. It must be ready to work with other socialist and progressively minded groups in a non sectarian manner. We recognise that a revolutionary working class party is necessary if capitalism is to be overthrown. We are not that party, but neither are those groups that claim to be. We will work to keep alive a tradition of militant working class action until such time as enough working class militants can be brought together to form that party.